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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Study on Indiana Food Hubs for Specialty Crops Offers Recommendations for Growing Local Food Systems

INDIANAPOLIS – A new study looking at ways to grow the state's network of specialty crop Food Hubs has offered five broad recommendations to help grow the burgeoning industry.

Food hubs bring growers and buyers together in ways that maintain the food value chain from farm to customer. This emerging system for the collection, processing and distribution of local foods can consist of space for retail vending, processing and equipment; community kitchens; and warehousing, packaging and transportation distribution facilities, among other services.

"This study confirms that there is a great upside to grow and promote the state's network of food hubs," said Ted McKinney, Director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). "We know that there is potential to grow Indiana's food hub network. This study now provides a road map with specific actions and activities that will help us expand this important agricultural activity."

The recommendations call for:

- The launch of a Virtual Indiana Food Hub Network, an online outlet for connecting efforts and opportunities for networking, sharing ideas, and collaboration.
- Exploration of a Sub-Hub Model for Hoosier Harvest Market, a Greenfield-based regional food hub model with an existing online purchasing system.
- Streamlining of State policies and procedures, including the incorporation of information on the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) Farm Produce Safety Initiative into the Indiana State Department of Agriculture website to better inform producers on requirements to sell to wholesalers.
- Improved marketing of Indiana specialty crops and regional food hubs by using the revamped Indiana Grown program (<http://www.in.gov/isda/2513.htm>) to showcase specialty crops as well as better educate wholesalers and institutional buyers and connect them with producers.
- Increased ISDA Food Hub Planning Resources by increasing and improving the advocacy role that ISDA currently plays through improved outreach, case studies, and assistance efforts in planning.

The study was conducted on behalf of the Indiana Department of Agriculture by Indianapolis-based consulting firm Thomas P. Miller and Associates in collaboration with Monrovia-based Prosperity Consulting. The project is funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant and administered by ISDA. The USDA defines specialty crops as "fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried

fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture." For more information on Indiana Food Hubs, [go here](#).

ABOUT ISDA

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. The Director is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Cabinet. Administratively, ISDA reports to Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann, who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture. Major responsibilities include advocacy for Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.

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